

Taggart (W.H.) Dr. Wm H. Hooper
With the regards of the
author

VALEDICTORY

TO THE

GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

Philadelphia College of Medicine.

AT THE

ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

MARCH 3d, 1858.

BY

WM. HEMBEL TAGGART, M. D.

Professor of Materia Medica.



PHILADELPHIA:

FROM BRYSON'S PRINTING ROOMS, 2 NORTH SIXTH ST.

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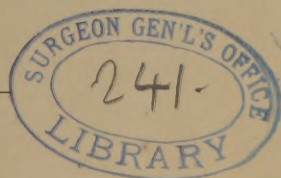
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PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, MARCH 1st, 1858.

PROF. WM. H. TAGGART.

DEAR SIR:—

At a meeting of the Graduating Class of the Philadelphia College of Medicine, held at the College edifice this day, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to request of you a copy of your Valedictory Address for publication; and, in making our request permit us to express the high esteem entertained for you by the Committee and Class.

Very truly yours,

A. S. ARCHER, PA.
RALPH L. COOPER, PA.
S. R. HAYNIE, S. C.
E. O. JACKSON, PA.
J. B. CRAWLEY, FLA.

MARCH 3d, 1858.

GENTLEMEN:—

Your kind note of the 1st inst., asking a copy of my Valedictory Address for publication, is received. Were I to consult my own feelings I should reply in the negative. But as you think it worthy, it is at your disposal.

With my hearty wishes for your future welfare, and the gentlemen you represent, I remain

Sincerely your friend,

WM. HEMBEL TAGGART.

To Messrs. ARCHER, COOPER, HAYNIE,
CRAWLEY, and JACKSON,

Committee.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN:

THE occasion is one that calls for congratulations. Conscious of the integrity of their course, the Faculty of the Philadelphia College of Medicine most heartily congratulate you on the honors you have this day acquired. Day after day, and week after week, have we examined you, and in the final contest have weighed you in the balance, and have not found you wanting. The seed we have sown has not fallen by the way-side, but upon good ground, where, by proper cultivation, we trust it will bring forth fruit, and ripen into golden harvests.

There is a touching interest in the scene which has just transpired. It witnesses your installation as members of an honorable profession. This to you is an event of great importance—of interest to your friends and relatives—and, as this numerous and brilliant audience attests, of interest to the whole community.

The entrance upon active life of a number of young men, ardent, buoyant, and generous, who have possessed the advantages of a liberal education, is well calculated to awaken feelings of interest. In the future they behold a brilliant prospect. There is not one among them whose expectations do not point to a life of usefulness, of honor, and of eminence. Such feelings, gentlemen, should be cherished. Some will, in all probability, reach the summit of their proudest hopes. Why should it not be so? Some who now eagerly anticipate distinction and fame, will be disappointed. Such is the lot of man. But in after life it will be a delightful reflection, if you shall not be obliged to ascribe it to your own neglect of

duties—to a want of persevering exertion—and to an omission to make the right use of means within your reach.

All the advantages which the most favored possess, have been yours: the difficulties of education you have overcome. If then you lag by the way, if you linger in obscurity, failing to reach the summit, you will have yourselves to blame. You will have thrown away the golden opportunity, never again to be recalled. The active duties of a professional life, in after years, will prevent that systematic course of study, which alone is essential to success. No diligent application of the morrow can make up for the omissions and neglects of to-day. All experience teaches us the illusory character of such expectations. No natural parts, however quick—no genius, however bright, will supply the want of study. Occasional spells of studiousness may produce slight effects, but it is only by daily and nightly study, long continued, that results worth struggling for can be obtained.

The truth of these remarks was clearly seen and deeply felt, even by the sages of heathen Greece and Rome: men to whose intellectual stature few ever aspire, and still fewer ever reach. How frequently do Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato discourse upon the necessity of study, as the prerequisite to high attainments in philosophy, and as indispensable to success in life.

These are the principles which have often in the history of the world been carried out into practice, and the results remain for our instruction and encouragement. What is the result of a careful study of history? Who are the really great and distinguished men? Who are they who have left their impress upon their times, and whose influence has been felt long after their bodies have mouldered into dust? Who are they who have given tone to the age in which they lived, who have guided and influenced the minds of their associates; who have been respected honored, and beloved; upon whose grave the tear of gratitude has dropped; around whose memory the bright halo of undying fame has gathered? I answer, they are the men who at all times, in all places, and to all men did their duty.

Believe me, gentlemen, when I say to you that the life before you is one of duty. Go not forth from this hall, decorated with the high commission of your degree, exulting in the belief that life is a mere dream. It is a stern reality. And yet the reflection is a sad one, that so many never learn the truth of this reality until the stream of time, upon which they are hurried along, precipitates them down a destructive cataract. Then, alas, it is found out that the world which the deceiving novelist pictures to the mind is all a delusion.

"Life is real—life is earnest:
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returnest;
Was not written of the soul."

It is all important to start aright in the world—to form such principles as will minister to your own happiness and that of society. Be true to yourselves, true to the advantages you have possessed, and no one need fear for the result. Be guided by those high principles of honor and of rectitude which have been inculcated in this institution, and the highest points of eminence which can be reached, will be yours. You will be respected by your fellow men, and gain a name which will be honored while you are living, and which the obscurity of the grave cannot obliterate when dead.

While with us, however, you have but laid the foundation upon which a splendid superstructure may be reared. But it is only the foundation. If on leaving these walls, you shall abandon habits of diligent application, believing the work of education to be completed, you will then discover how easy it is to descend from a height, how hard it is to retrace the downward steps.

The pursuit of wisdom is in itself a high gratification. Every acquisition of information, while it will increase your means of usefulness, will elevate your character, and furnish a panoply against the dangers which surround you. Every inducement to a continuance in well-doing is placed before you. No avenue to wealth, distinction, or fame is closed. All invite your approach. But none are to be travelled

without labor, without encountering obstacles. There will be times of depression, but then it is that you will be called to put forth the strength of your character; there will be days of triumph, and these will be multiplied in proportion to your own worthiness. The habit of labor itself is essential to success. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," is the primeval curse which rests upon us all, though by a wise submission it may be turned into a blessing. It is true in the physical world, *nil sine labore*. We must be doing something, and if what we do be not good, it certainly will be evil. Idleness is never long innocent. All the expedients to enrich a country will ever be found vain, otherwise than such as result from the products of toil. And labor, thank God, is ennobling. What has it not accomplished? It has tunneled the cloud-capped mountain; it has dug deep into the bowels of the earth, and made them disgorge to supply your wants; it has studded the ocean with sturdy ships; it has written your thoughts with livid lightning. He boasts with just and honest pride, who writes upon his escutcheon that heaven-blest motto, "*Labor vincit omnia*."

It is true in the intellectual world. The heights of science are steep, and to ascend them we must, like the mountaineer, be strong and sturdy. Without a habit of diligent application no mind has ever attained decided greatness in any walk. No genius, however bright, can leap at once to the advance. To excel in the path of truth, which has ever been, and is, trodden by so many master spirits, — nay, even to follow them, — requires not only boldness but endurance: and that endurance cannot come except from a habit of labor, early acquired and steadily maintained. The athlete of the Olympic games was not crowned for that day's victory, but for the long years of constant training, which enabled him to win it. Thus, gentlemen, must the mind be disciplined.

Living, as every wise man lives, for posterity, responsible as every one is for the results of his conduct, faithfulness in duty becomes a sacred obligation. It is strange that any should be recreant to so important a duty. You cannot even tempt the faithful watch dog from his post, or bribe him to

play false. To face the storm of popular prejudice requires more courage than to succumb to it. Heroism is not seen solely on the battle field. And the man, wherever found, who plants his feet upon the rock of truth, and dares to be honest in the worst of times, lives and dies a hero, and is not the less so because the multitude may brand his memory with inconsistency.

You, gentlemen, have entered a profession in which the labor of study never ceases. A life lengthened out to a patriarchal age would not be sufficient to complete them. You have, while with us, learned to study, and I trust learned to love it. Now you are to begin to build. Now is your time to map out your course of life—to settle the definite purpose to which your life shall be devoted. To what do you propose to apply the power you have acquired? It is a true saying that “knowledge is power.” In the hands of a good man, it is the instrument of blessings to society—in the hands of a bad man, it is the instrument of destruction and of evil: it is the security of the patriot, or the dagger of the traitor. If you use it as the former, then does a noble destiny await you; if you use it as the latter, far better would it be if the walls of the Philadelphia College of Medicine were to crumble into dust, and its name be obliterated from the face of the earth.

Never was there a time, in the history of men and empires, when the world stood more in need of educated men of the right character; men of integrity, of honor, of trust-worthiness. It is no time for listless inactivity—for dreaming speculation, for impracticable theorizing. The tendencies of the age are onward. The call is for action; and unless professional men meet the wants of society, and fall in with and lead on the spirit of the age, they will be cast down with the execrations of the living, and merit the anathemas of all future generations. If they fail in coming up to these duties, in answering the calls that are made upon them to be faithful, the cause of human progress will be thrown back, and the car of improvement retarded in its march. Read the daily reports of outrage and wrong with which the earth is filled.

Look at your own glorious land, her counsels perplexed with fearful dissensions, and tell me if the supply of patriotism is equal to the demand for it; if the diseases of the body politic do not call for the interposition of good and healing influences. For what then will you strike? Will you for fame, or wealth, or pleasure? Let me then present to your contemplation a character that unites them all. The living, active form of pure Benevolence; the character so seldom seen in life. The character that possesses in itself all that is true of fame, and wealth, and pleasure: whose patriotism is the pure love of country, whose code of morals is the love of man; a character that will outlast the marble, and live when the genius of history closes up the records of time. The benevolence of which I speak is not merely a feeling, but a principle; not a dream of rapture for the fancy to indulge in, but a business for the hands to execute. We may be generous, and yet not be benevolent. The former is rather the spontaneous act of the heart, drawn forth by some object of pity; the latter is a pervading quality of the soul, which lives in every thought, and exhibits itself in all our actions. It embraces the exercise of the law of kindness and affection, under all circumstances, and in all our relations to the world. "It lives, moves and has its being" in the heart. Its office is to do good, and make others happy. It is like fragrance in the garden of roses, which sheds its perfume alike on the beggar and the king. The true gold mines of the world are not found only among the mountains of California. They are all about you, wherever the opportunity is offered of doing good to your fellow man, of benefitting your common country, of reforming and blessing the world. There are all around you other Sebastopols, where, like Florence Nightingale, you can plunge into the depths of misery, attend to the neglected, visit the forsaken, remember the forgotten, and cast a ray of hope over the rough pathway of those who have been stricken down in the battle of life. Here is your field of labor, and the harvest that awaits you, if you possess the spirit of benevolence. Choose this character of benevolence, as the great model by which to form your own, and

the world will be better for your intercourse with it. Strike for such a character, and your country will bless you for it; and when your race on earth is finished, "your light will gently melt away, like the star of the morning, into the light of heaven."

The time has arrived, gentlemen, when the mere honor of the medical diploma has passed away. When the question, now asked, is not who has a medical diploma, but rather who has not one? When every town of any size has its school of medicine, and the consequence is, that annually floods of half-educated M. D's. are poured out upon the country, whose only qualification for the degree is that they have paid so much for attending lectures, and so much for their titles, after a few insignificant questions have been asked them. To such you are, however, honorable exceptions; for I can assert with truth that the honors of the Philadelphia College of Medicine are not given without the requirement of as respectable degrees of knowledge, as the system of medical education in our country admits of. I say it, with shame, that the profession of medicine, than which none is more noble, none more worthy of our best exertions, and honest ambition, is too often degraded by converting the privilege it imparts, to the pitiful business of pecuniary gain. Professional courtesy, principle, integrity, and virtue, all are sacrificed at the shrine of filthy lucre. Can there be anything which calls more imperiously for the indignation of honorable men; any subject connected with our profession which demands more serious investigation? See to it, then, Graduates, that in your future life you prostitute neither your professional privileges or integrity to the mean business of gain.

I freely admit that "every laborer is worthy of his hire," but what I would urge is, that the profession which we have all selected as worthy of our special consideration—a profession which ranks among its members some of the best and most enlightened men that ever flourished in any country—should not be prostituted to the ignoble and servile purposes of gain. Your first duty is to heal the sick. Properly pursued it may yield you a competence; but with the good physician, the thought of remuneration should be secondary.

One of the difficulties existing in our profession, and which is one of the causes of what I have just spoken, is that many individuals commence the study of medicine without having the necessary education. Many are induced to prosecute it as a means of subsistence, and the consequence is, that it becomes a sort of business transaction. The system of medical instruction in this country is full of glaring defects. It would be well if the course of study was extended — if none but those who showed sufficient evidences of a collegiate degree, or of a good preliminary education, were allowed to enter upon its study. And we hope soon to hail the day when the system of medical education in our country will claim for its motto, "Excelsior." Let but the step be taken by our older sister institutions, and foremost in the ranks laboring by their side, in the noble work of medical reform, will be found your Alma Mater.

You can, gentlemen, also aid in regulating to a very great extent, the evil of which I speak. The reception of office pupils is one of the means by which every member of the profession can assist in raising the standard and dignity of the profession. Take into your office none whose previous education has been neglected; none whose mental attainments are far below the standard; none who are addicted to intemperance or other vices. If such apply to you, rather direct their attention to the workshop or the ploughshare, and advise them to bid adieu forever to the profession of medicine. Follow this, and your pupils will honor you, while our graduating classes will shed lustre on the profession.

Besides the knowledge appertaining to his profession, the physician should possess other educational acquirements. The knowledge of many of the collateral sciences, such as Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, Zoology, Metereology, and others, it is important he should be acquainted with. They all contribute to his resources, will often shed light upon obscure points, and render his efforts more successful. The world requires you to know something more than calomel and rhubarb, something more than the mere details of your profession. It requires that you should be conversant with

history; the state of man in all ages and nations, as modified by laws, climate, and language; the literature of the past and present; the political opinions and religious beliefs of the age. In fact there are but few branches of knowledge that may not be made subservient to that of medicine, and the knowledge of which will not only render you better physicians, but raise you in the opinion of the world. An ignorant physician is abhorred by every one. Such a one may pass along in the profession, without having special attention attracted to his deficiencies, but, like the bird with its wings clipped, he can never rise. The minnows of every profession are allowed their shallow streams to subsist and play in, but it is only the powerful who plunge in the ocean, and ride in triumph on the foam of the waves, as beings of superior strength, whose energies enable them to buffet the billows. Shame on him who is content to sit on the base of the mountain, when its summit is to be reached. Rather, gentlemen, invoke the strength of the fearless eagle, who, careering in his might, shakes difficulties from his outstretched pinions, and soars straight forward to the burning disc of the blazing sun.

He who though blest with the highest grasp of intellect, yet remains listless to every thing which goes on around him; who is content with the *mediam viam*, and who fails to impress his character upon the age in which he lives, is a disgrace to humanity. The world is no better for having such to live in it. Strenuous determination must give practical utility to thought. This principal is illustrated in every department of life. We would yet have been strangers to the discoveries which measure the magnitude of the stars, and calculate with certainty the return of the blazing meteors, if men gifted with mathematical precision had not undertaken the labor with a view to enlighten the world. The mighty ocean would still have remained a sea of terror, if science had not mapped out its channels, or warned us from its treacherous paths. The explorations of the Arctic regions would have never been attempted if the indomitable energy of the bold and fearless, had not been equal to the fearful

emergency. Practice, gentlemen, in your profession, the precepts I have here inculcated, and rely upon it that success will be yours. That your star will rise far above the common horizon, and that when it does, the Faculty of your Alma Mater will be the first to hail its rising, and welcome it among the constellations of science.

Against the evils of quackery I would raise my warning voice. It is the age of empiricism in all things. In the form of Mormonism it is jeopardising our souls; while under the form of a system marshalled under the infinitesimal banner, or privateering on individual account, it is undermining our bodies. Do you doubt its existence? look to your morning advertiser, the signs upon your shutters, the placards on your walls, and they will save me the burden of reply. Were I to picture the amount of suffering annually accruing to the community from the evils of charlatanism, your sensibility would be shocked, perhaps, without enlightening your judgment. Who that has studied the complexity of that machine, which justly claims the title of the master piece of nature, would dare to tamper with its slender cords, and delicate springs, or trust it in the hands of the ignorant and bold pretender? The lives of beloved and cherished beings, of husbands and wives, the heads of families, and the rulers of nations, are too sacred to be trifled with, even by those who understand the anatomy of the human frame, and who possess a full knowledge of the profession, as communicated by the schools. Be not, gentlemen, drawn aside from your legitimate calling by the deceitful, although successful appearance (as regards wealth,) of empiricism. Remember that from time immemorial the world has always lavished its honors on unworthy objects: that shining are preferred to useful qualities, and the glittering tinsel of outward accomplishments more highly estimated than the sterling graces that adorn the virtuous character. Genius and true merit oftentimes lives and dies in a garret, while the pretender and the quack may ride to power, and rear on high their palatial mansions and granite piles, emulous of heaven's fair heights. But they have their reward. Their ill-gained wealth may bring them

all the physical comforts of this life, but it cannot buy them the respect of the world, nor give them that "peace of mind which passeth knowledge," the sweet consciousness of an upright, honest life.

In the competition with your brother physicians, let the true spirit of emulation govern your feelings and intercourse with them. Strive to be distinguished by courtesy, by accomplishments, by scholarship. Such a competition is generous and honorable, bearing no similitude to that narrow spirit which generates a jealous rivalry. Thus you will strengthen the bonds of union—conciliate good-will, and reciprocally promote each others prosperity. And here let me urge upon you the importance of adhering strictly to the Code of Ethics with which each of you have this day been presented. It is the authoritative rule of action in our country; to it you are responsible, and by it you are to be professionally governed.

One parting counsel more, before your barks are yet loosed from their moorings, and you are sailing on the ocean of life, and I have done. Two ways open before you;—the way of duty, and the way of expediency. The one illumined by the cheering rays of celestial truth, the other surrounded by the lurid glare of error, sensuality and vice. The one will conduct you to usefulness, to happiness, and to honor; the other will bring you to misery and to shame. Nor is this all; in your wrong choice your country suffers. Upon what does the fabric of her institutions rest? It is answered, upon the virtue and intelligence of her people. If these be wanting, then that proud fabric must fall. That fall, gentlemen, you will accelerate, unless you go forth hence clad in the panoply of virtue. Bear with you the treasures of science; take with you the well-tempered sword of learning—wield that sword wisely and bravely—meet manfully the duties of life—give to your varied pursuits the best energies of your minds; whatever you undertake aim high; and then, by the blessing of heaven, you will share in the praiseworthy

exertions of those who have done their country good service Remember you carry with you the credit of science, the reputation of your teachers, the name of your Alma Mater. Act, then, worthy of the trust.

Trials will often meet you on every side—disappointments will often test your courage; but hold on in the path of rectitude, and at the close of life you will have within you a wealth of noble thoughts—memories of noble actions—hopes of a noble felicity. So dear, from long-accustomed habit will the path of duty become, that when old age shall gently wither your strength, you will still be found tottering on to honor and immortality. There will be tears for your death, when your spirits are with God.

But, gentlemen, I must close. Sounds from home are echoing on your ears. Kind voices there are calling you away from us. A mother's anxious breast is heaving with joy to welcome you; a father's cheek is flushing with excitement in expectation of your return; and perhaps there is one, not less beloved,

“Whose eye will mark your coming,
And look brighter when you come,”

who is listening for the music of the returning footsteps. From that happy meeting we would not longer detain you. Go, then, and in the name of the Great Physician, “Go heal the sick.”

